

If It's True | Drew denDulk

Characters

STEPH: *the one who is real.*

CAL: *the one who is not.*

ANNA: *the one who is soft.*

JAMIE: *the one who brought the drinks.*

SCENE

The wind whistles softly. The beach is empty, the weather a little too cold and water a little too mean for a normal person's enjoyment. STEPH sits alone, dressed in short and a large hoodie, a hoodie that clearly is too big to be hers originally. A small urn sits next to her in the sand.

STEPH
Guess this is it.

A beat. STEPH looks out over the water, lost for a moment.

STEPH
I did promise I'd drop you in the ocean, but maybe I should wait until summer, when the weather's a bit nicer. You always liked it better when it was warmer.

Another moment of silence. Suddenly, there's another person there, walking up to STEPH and sitting down on the other side of the urn. CAL is not dressed for the cold, in shorts and a tank top. He looks windswept despite only just arriving at the beach.

CAL
I'm sure it'll be fine.

STEPH

He'd hate it. To be dropped in the water when it's like this, he'd have hated it.

CAL

I'm sure he would understand.

STEPH

I don't know.

A beat. Suddenly STEPH stands, looking like she might do something drastic—like she might leave.

STEPH

Today isn't right. I should wait, I should wait until the weather's better, until the water's calmer. He wouldn't like it this way, he wouldn't—

CAL reaches towards her to pull her back down, but doesn't touch her. His hand hovers a few inches away from hers.

CAL

It'll be ok.

STEPH looks at him for a long moment before sitting back down.

CAL

Tell me about him.

STEPH

Why? You already know everything.

CAL

Humor me. I want to hear what he was like from you.

STEPH

I don't think I can put it into words.

CAL

Try.

Beat.

STEPH

He was... everything. He was like the sun, if the sun didn't hurt to look at. Everything he did, he did for a reason. Everything he said, he thought through two times before saying it. He was just so... him.

CAL

And now?

STEPH

What do you mean?

CAL

What's he like now?

STEPH

He's... everything he used to be but bigger. Brighter. He's everywhere. I can see him everywhere. He loved the beach. He loved the ocean, he would always drag me down here when we both had the day off from classes.

CAL

I remember.

STEPH

Every year he surprised me for my birthday with breakfast and coffee. He hated sugary coffee, but he would always make it especially sugary when I asked. He bought me my first drink on my 21st, only a week after his 21st.

CAL

I remember that too. You chugged it, decided you needed more, then downed six shots. Then you spent the rest of the night in the bathroom throwing up. I thought you were gonna swear off alcohol forever, but we went right back the next week.

STEPH

So it's *his* fault I have a problem now.

CAL

Yeah, but not for that.

A beat. They look out over the water. There's something more to what was just said that they both seem to understand, but neither is willing to say it out loud. Then, before either can say another word, ANNA and JAMIE appear. They are dressed similarly to STEPH. ANNA's in a dress, and JAMIE's in jeans and a t-shirt. They sit down next to STEPH, away from CAL and the urn. JAMIE hands STEPH a can.

JAMIE

Cheers, guys! To the best friend we could've asked for.

JAMIE leans over STEPH to clink his own can against the urn. CAL snorts, but both STEPH and ANNA give him matching looks of disapproval.

ANNA

I'm sure he'd love that you showed up to the party already tipsy, Jay.

JAMIE

What do you mean? Of course he would! He'd probably have gone pregaming with me.

CAL

That's true.

JAMIE and ANNA don't seem to acknowledge CAL as he speaks, but STEPH sends him a disapproving look. He just grins back at her.

JAMIE

(raising his can into the sky)

To the worst brother I could've asked for!

ANNA

(raising her own can)

To the only person who would let me copy off his exam paper!

They clink cans together before taking a drink. STEPH watches them, her can still unopened in her hands. CAL watches STEPH.

CAL
Are you going to drink that?

STEPH
What's the point? It won't help anything.

CAL
Well it could—

JAMIE
It'll help us not cry when we toss that metal box into the ocean.

ANNA
We're throwing the whole thing? I thought we were pouring it out.

JAMIE
No, we gotta throw it all so it sinks to the bottom. If we spill it, it'll just blow back onto the sand, and then little kids are gonna be making sandcastles out of a dead person.

CAL laughs at this. STEPH does not.

STEPH
Don't make jokes like that.

JAMIE
Why not? At least I'm coping, even if it's not through the best mechanisms.

ANNA
You could come to church with me on Sunday.

JAMIE
Hell to the no! Sorry Annie, I love you, but you will never get me into that weird old building. With my luck, it'll probably fall on me.

ANNA

There is a bible story about that.

ANNA and JAMIE continue to drink and bicker, but STEPH ignores them. CAL scoots a little closer to her, still remaining opposite of the urn and her.

CAL
They mean well.

STEPH
I know.

CAL
It's not their fault.

STEPH
I know.

CAL
It's not your fault either.

STEPH
I...

CAL
It's not.

STEPH
Maybe I could convince myself if—if it had been an accident, if he hadn't meant to do it, or—or if it had happened in a different way, maybe I could believe I didn't cause it.

CAL
You didn't. This is no one's fault but his.

STEPH
How can you say that?

CAL
Because I was there.

JAMIE

Steph, settle a debate for us. Everything he said, he thought through two times before saying it. Did Cal ever actually sleep with that TA our freshmen year or was he just bluffing?

STEPH

How the hell is that at all relevant right now?

ANNA

It's all in good fun, Stephie.

JAMIE

It's just a joke, Steph! We're reminiscing. Isn't that what you're supposed to do in these situations?

STEPH

I don't—

CAL

I didn't sleep with that TA, actually.

STEPH

He didn't.

ANNA cheers while JAMIE groans—clearly ANNA just won the debate. CAL smiles at them. STEPH can hardly bear to look at them right now.

JAMIE

Alright, whatever. Are we doing this thing or what?

ANNA

Now's as good a time as any.

They both turn to STEPH expectantly. She takes a deep breath, standing and picking up the urn. At the same time, ANNA and JAMIE stand, coming to either side of her and putting their palms on her shoulders. CAL stands as well, a little to the side of the group. STEPH watches him for a moment, gripping the urn tightly.

STEPH

If I ask a question, will you answer it honestly?

CAL

Of course.

STEPH

Is it true what they say about... well, you know? Whatever comes next?

A beat. CAL smiles sadly.

CAL

I don't know yet.

STEPH

How can you not know?

CAL

I can't go there until you let me go, Steph. I need you to let me go.

ANNA

It's time to let him go, Steph.

JAMIE

We're here with you Stephie, but it's time to say goodbye.

CAL

It's time for me to go now, Steph.

A long beat. STEPH pulls her hands back like she's getting ready to throw the urn. Instead, she holds it out and offers it to CAL. CAL takes it carefully, giving her a grateful nod. ANNA and JAMIE react like she threw it, following the urn through the sky until it crashes into the water.

CAL

I'll see you later, Stephie.

CAL starts to walk away.

STEPH
Wait!

CAL pauses.

STEPH
Do—Do you really have to go? Why can't we get more time?

CAL
I'm so sorry, Steph. We don't have any more time. It's my fault that we don't, and for whatever it's worth, I'm sorry.

STEPH
I don't forgive you. Not yet. But I will one day.

CAL nods.

CAL
I'll be waiting.

CAL leaves. STEPH watches him go. After a moment, ANNA and JAMIE leave as well, leaning into each other for comfort. STEPH remains behind, staring out at the ocean.

STEPH
We should've waited for the summer. He would've wanted it to be warmer.

STEPH watches the ocean for a long while before standing. She steadies herself, finding her courage, and walks into the waves, after her friend